

WHY CLASSICAL SINGERS USE A SPECIAL FACIAL EXPRESSION?

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This study aimed to explain the possible reason why classical singers spread their nostrils and raise the cheeks before starting to sing. Four subjects (3 classical singers, 1 non-singer) were investigated with nasofiberoscopy while holding their breath after inhalation. The subjects were instructed to have a neutral expression first and then to take the singers' expression. The following measurements were made: 1) height of soft palate (distance between the floor and ceiling of the nasal cavity), 2) width over the length of glottis. Additionally, the pharyngeal and epilaryngeal areas were considered when they were properly visible. According to the results, all subjects raised the soft palate somewhat and widened the pharyngeal inlet, epilaryngeal outlet and the glottis during 'singer's expression'.

The results suggest that classical singers take advantage of breathing related connections between nasal and facial muscles and the larynx. The reasons for this may be to avoid a hard glottal attack and pressed phonation and supposedly also to assist phonation in 'head register' that requires a smaller vocal fold contact area compared to modal register phonation.